

THE TEMPTING OF TAVERNAKE

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

A Tale of Love, Mystery and Intrigue

CHAPTER XXIII—(Continued)

"Yet she sent you away. She didn't care what became of me. She was watching the door all the time before he came. Who is he?"

"That's answered gravely, 'but it means a good deal. There's mischief afoot tonight, Tavernake.' 'You seem to thrive on it,' Tavernake rejoined, smiling. 'Any more bunkum?'"

"Come," he said, "you're a sensible chap. Take these things for what they're worth. Believe me, a great deal more in the world than that man Mrs. Wenham Gardner ever bargained for."

"I wish you'd tell me who he is," Tavernake begged. "I don't know," said Pritchard, "but I believe you're right. The man who is most irritable about the bulk of a father, is most irritable about the bulk of a son."

"You'll have to put up with it a little longer, I'm afraid," he said. "You've done me a good turn; I'll do you one. I'll give you some good advice. Keep out of this place so long as the old man and his daughter are hanging out here. They make them—but she's gone wrong from the start. They ain't your sort, Tavernake. You don't fit in anywhere. Take my advice and book it altogether."

"I can't do that just now," he said. "Good-night! I'm off for the present, at any rate." Pritchard, too, rose to his feet. He pushed his arm through Tavernake's.

"Young man," he remarked, "there are no many in this country whom I can trust. You're one of them. There's a sort of solidity about you that I rather admire. You are much likely to break out and do silly things. Do you care for adventures?"

"I detest them," Tavernake answered, "especially the sort I tumbled into the other night." Pritchard laughed softly. They had left the room now and were walking along the open space at the end of the restaurant, leading to the main exit.

some well to do of courage. "You know me too well to believe me capable of seeking a meeting which I feared. It is the strange thing which has happened to you during these last few months—this last year. Do you know—has any one told you that you seem to have become even more like the image of—?"

"Of poor Wenham! Many people have told me that. Of course, you know that way. I always appallingly alike, and they always said that we should become more so in middle-age. After all, there is only a year between us. We might have been twins."

"That's the most terrible thing in likeness I have ever seen," the woman continued slowly. "When you entered the room a few seconds ago, it seemed to me that a miracle had happened. It seemed to me that the dead had come to life."

"It must have been a shock," the man murmured, with his eyes upon the tablecloth. "It was," she agreed, hoarsely. "Can't you see it in my face? I do not always look like you. I have a certain look, you see the gray shadows that are there? You see, I admit it frankly. I was terrified—I am terrified!"

"Why?" she asked, looking at him wonderingly. "Doesn't it seem to you a terrible thing to think of the dead coming back to life?" "I tapped lightly upon the tablecloth for a moment with my fingers," she said. "Then he looked at her again. 'It depends,' he said, 'upon the manner of their death.'"

"An executioner of the Middle Ages could not have played with my fingers more skillfully. The woman was shivering now, preserving some outward appearance of calm only by the most forced and unnatural effort."

"What do you mean by that, Jerry?" she asked. "I was not even with Wenham when he was lost. You know all about it, I suppose—how it happened?" "The man nodded thoughtfully. 'I have heard many stories,' he admitted. 'Before we leave the subject for ever, I should like to hear it from you, from your own lips.'"

"There was a bottle of champagne upon the table, ordered by the waiter. She touched her glass; the waiter filled it. She raised it to her lips and set it down empty. Her fingers were clutched the tablecloth."

but she turned on the electric light. The cloth slipped from her shoulders. He took her hands and looked at her. "Jerry," she whispered, "you mustn't look at me like that. You terrify me! Let me go!"

She wrenched herself free with an effort. She stepped back to the corner of the room, as far as she could get from him. Her heart was beating fiercely. Somehow or other, neither of these two young men, ever whose lives she had certainly brought to bear a very wonderful influence, had ever before stirred her pulses like this. What was it, she wondered? What was the meaning of it?

Why didn't he speak? He did nothing but look, and there were unutterable things in his eyes. Was he angry with her because she had married Wenham or was he blaming her because Wenham had gone? There was passion in his face, but such passion! Desire, perhaps, but what else? She caught up a telegram which lay upon her writing desk, and tore it open. It was an escape for a moment. She read the words, stared, and read them aloud incredulously. It was from her father.

"Jerry Gardner sailed for New York today," she looked up at the man, and as she looked her face grew gray and the thin sweat went quivering from her lifeless fingers to the floor. Then he began to laugh, and she knew "Wenham!" she shrieked. "Wenham!"

There was murder in his face, murder almost in his laugh. "Your loving husband?" he answered. "She sprang for the door, but even as she moved she heard the click of the bolt shot back. He touched the electric switch and the room was suddenly in darkness. She heard him coming to her. She felt his hot breath upon her cheek. 'My loving wife!' he whispered. 'At last!'"

CHAPTER XXV. THE MADMAN TALKS. Tavernake turned on the light. Pritchard, with a quick leap forward, seized Wenham around the waist and dragged him away. Elizabeth had fainted; she lay upon the floor, her face the color of marble.

"Get some water and throw over her," Pritchard ordered. "Tavernake obeyed. He threw open the window and let in a current of air. In a moment or two the woman stirred and raised her head."

"Look after her for a minute," Pritchard said. "I'll lock this fierce little person up in the bathroom." Pritchard carried his prisoner out. Tavernake leaned over the woman who was slowly coming back to consciousness. "All me about it," she asked, hoarsely. "Where were you?"

Elizabeth laughed, not quite pleasantly. "You speak as though the rest of us," she remarked, "were qualified to take orders in wickedness."

He helped himself to more brandy. "Think back," he said. "Think of those days in New York, the life we led, the wild things we did week after week, month after month, the same eternal round of turning night into day, of struggling everywhere to find new pleasures, pulling vice to pieces like children trying to find the inside of their playthings."

"I don't like your mood in the least," she interrupted. "He drummed for a moment upon the tablecloth with his fingers. 'We were talking of Beatrice. You don't even know where she is now, then?'"

"I have no idea," Elizabeth declared. "She was with you for long in Cornwall," Elizabeth toyed with her wineglass for a minute. "She was there about a month," she admitted. "And she didn't approve of the way you and Wenham behaved," she demanded. "Apparently not. She left us, anyway. She didn't understand Wenham in the least. I shouldn't be surprised," Elizabeth went on, "to hear that she was a hospital nurse, or learning typing, or a clerk in an office. She was a young woman of gloomy ideas, although she was my sister."

He came a little closer toward her. "Elizabeth," he said, "we will not talk any more about Beatrice. We will not talk any more about anything except our two selves."

"Are you really glad to see me again, Jerry?" she asked softly. "You must know it, dear," he whispered. "You must know that I loved you always, that I adored you. Oh, you know it! Don't tell me you didn't. You know it, Elizabeth!"

She looked down at the tablecloth. "Yes, I know it," she admitted, softly. "Can't you guess what it is to me to see you again like this?" he continued. She sighed. "It is something for me, too, to feel that I have a friend close at hand."

"Come," he said, "they are turning out the lights here. You want to know about Wenham's property. Let me come upstairs with you for a little time and I will tell you as much as I can from memory."

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For twenty years this man was "holed up in a little business" in town. He was getting tired of the hole, so he bought a farm.

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Table with RECEIPTS and EXPENSES columns. RECEIPTS: Strawberries \$300, Raspberries 100, Red raspberries 20, Blackberries 50, Grapes 100, Potatoes 150, Celery 150. Cabbage \$100, Other truck 100, Cow 150, Calf 10, Pigs 70, Coll. less service of horse 40, Bees 50. Total receipts \$1710, Total expenses 250, Net \$1460.

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The Story of a Man Who Got Out of a Hole

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In the issue of The COUNTRY GENTLEMAN That Is Out TODAY

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Do You Know that Railroad Expansion Makes Work and Stimulates Industry?

Money saved by the railroads flows back to the people. The \$2,000,000 paid annually by the railroads of Pennsylvania and New Jersey to unnecessary trainmen, forced upon them by the Full Crew—'excess man crew'—Laws, deprives the people of the big benefits and advantages this money, properly expended, would bring.

Because the efficient development of the railway industry in these States is so materially identified with the prosperity of the farmer, business man, working man, and scores of more or less affiliated industries, the railroads ask the people to help them save this huge amount—now absolutely wasted—that it may go to useful purposes and work toward restoration of general prosperity.

Table showing material going into the production of 80 locomotives, 831 men would get employment as follows: In steel mills 205, In blast furnaces 45, In iron mines 140, In coal and coke production 160, In other work 400.

Wages for all these men would amount to \$1,750,000. This wage money going into circulation would make work in hundreds of other directions.

Railroad development bears upon all industries. It affects hundreds of businesses, thousands of individuals. Under normal conditions, the railroads constitute a great constructive force. Increasing their facilities and improving their systems results in stimulating all industry and business and automatically creates work for innumerable persons in many occupations.

Increased industrial activity swells passenger and freight traffic. This means more trains and real work for additional crews. In turn, it necessitates more locomotives and cars, increased equipment, erection of new and remodeling of old stations, reduction of grades and curves, elimination of grade crossings, construction of sidings in producing territories, increased passenger and freight terminal facilities.

The welfare of the people and the prosperity of the railroads are closely linked. The railroads find their prosperity in the general welfare. They seek not to decrease, but to increase, employment.

Communicate in person, by letter, or otherwise—TODAY—with your elected representatives at Harrisburg and Trenton. Ask them to repeal the Full Crew Laws. Call attention to the fact that, of 282 editorials received to date, 229 urge the repeal of the laws.

Let all get together to start the wheels of industry turning—to open wide the doors to prosperity.

- SAMUEL REA, President, Pennsylvania Railroad. DANIEL WILLARD, President, Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. THEODORE VOORHEES, President, Philadelphia and Reading Railway. R. L. O'DONNELL, Chairman, Executive Committee, Associated Railroads of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. 72 Commercial Trust Building, Philadelphia.